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ABSTRACT

State activities to collect information on program outcomes for students enrolled in postsecondary vocational education were examined in spring 1990. A multistage process, beginning with a review of state reports and legislation, was followed by telephone interviews with state officials. The average number of respondents per state was five. Governance of secondary and postsecondary vocational education was commonly divided among a variety of state agencies. This division severely limited states' ability to develop comprehensive policies. No state measured program outcomes in the same way for students in public postsecondary programs and in proprietary school programs. States collected information about the number of program completers, job placement of program completers, and job placement related to training. The most frequently used sources of information were surveys of former students and surveys of employers. An increasing interest in third-party data was noted. Few states attempted to verify the validity of data reported by schools. Most states that required schools to report data did not analyze it. States used collected student outcome data to conduct individual program reviews, respond to ad hoc requests from the government, and compile profiles available to public and proprietary institutions. State policies on outcome measurement were changing rapidly, as evidenced by new legislation and descriptions of new procedures. (YLB)

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State-Level Measurement of Performance Outcomes in Postsecondary Vocational Education

Volume I: Executive Summary
An Overview of State Policies

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STATE-LEVEL MEASUREMENT OF PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES IN POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Volume I: Executive Summary
An Overview of State Policies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In vocational education, as in other areas of education, assessment of performance outcomes is increasingly viewed as a way to measure program quality and to motivate program improvement. This study surveyed states to learn more about how they currently assess student outcomes in postsecondary vocational programs. It was found that most states have undertaken limited activities to assess performance outcomes, but few states have employed multiple measures of performance, and most have had difficulty in analyzing the data that they collect or in using it for program improvement or policy. It was also found that many states are making efforts to increase the quality and comprehensiveness of the information collected and to make greater use of the information collected.

Federal education policy is moving rapidly toward an emphasis on measuring performance as an indicator of program accountability. The recently reauthorized Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act requires states to develop performance measures and standards for vocational education at the secondary and postsecondary levels. The provisions of the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990 mandate that institutions offering postsecondary vocational programs provide prospective students with information about the graduation rates of previous students. This is commonly called "consumer rights information." Performance standards, tied to accreditation or eligibility for student aid, is increasingly viewed as one option to curb program abuse and improve accountability in postsecondary vocational programs.

This study was motivated by the "consumer rights" rules in the U.S. Department of Education's student aid program; hence, the focus is on postsecondary education. The study offers a "snapshot" of what states were doing in the spring of 1990 to collect information on program outcomes for students enrolled in postsecondary vocational education. It attempts to answer three questions:

1. <u>To what extent do states collect program information on student outcomes and, if so, what types of information?</u> Do outcome measures include program completion, job placement, training-related job placement, earnings, job competencies, or satisfaction of occupational licensing requirements?

2. How is information on program outcomes obtained? What is the source of data? Who interprets the data? What are potential threats to the accuracy, comparability, and consistency of the information obtained?

3. How is information on program outcomes used? Are there state standards that must be satisfied? Is the information used to allocate funds for program management or policy? Is the information made available to consumers?

Information for this study was collected during the spring of 1990. A multi-stage process, beginning with a review of state reports and legislation, was followed by telephone interviews with state officials to get additional information. To complete a comprehensive description of the activities in each state, it was necessary to contact a wide range of state officials responsible for postsecondary vocational education in the public and private sectors. The average number of respondents per state was five. (It was also necessary to talk briefly with an average of four additional persons in the state government to identify the most knowledgeable individuals.) Efforts were made to validate respondent information about the nature of state policy by seeking confirmation from more than one source or from written documentation. This was not always possible. The practices reported from the states may therefore reflect some degree of overstatement.

Major Findings

Governance

There is typically no single state agency with responsibility for vocational education. Governance of secondary and postsecondary vocational education is commonly divided among a variety of state agencies. Within the postsecondary sector, there may be different agencies responsible for programs offered through vocational-technical institutes and community colleges. Almost always, proprietary schools are overseen through separate state entities, and frequently by multiple licensing boards corresponding to different occupational areas.

The division of vocational education governance severely limits the ability of states to develop comprehensive policies that apply equally to all institutions, public and private, offering postsecondary vocational training. Only in a few states, all of which have a single agency administering all of postsecondary vocational education, have there been efforts to implement uniform practices across all sectors of postsecondary vocational education.

This study found no state that currently measures program outcomes in the same way for students in public postsecondary programs and in proprietary school programs. In interpreting the results of

this study, therefore, it is important to remember that findings about state practices are characterizations about particular sectors of postsecondary vocational education--not all sectors that provide vocational education.

Moreover, to the extent that state policies exist, the most ambitious efforts have been undertaken in public vocational education. Forty-six states collect some outcome information from public institutions, while only 29 collect any outcome information from proprietary institutions. In all but 7 states, more types of information are collected from public institutions than from private institutions.

Types of Information Collected

Most states collect some information about program outcomes. The most frequently collected outcome measure is the number of students who complete a training program (found in 46 states for public schools and 29 states for proprietary schools). The next most frequently collected measure is whether program completers are placed in jobs (33 states for public schools and 21 states for proprietary schools). Most states attempt to determine whether the job placement is related to the training provided, although this practice is much less common for proprietary schools than it is for public schools. Outcomes such as earnings, gains in basic skills and job knowledge, and results from state licensing exams are collected in a small number of states.

Definitions

Most states that measure completions have developed standardized definitions of who is a completer (39 of 43 states in the public sector and 26 of 29 states for proprietary schools). The most common definition of a completer is an individual who completes all program requirements and is awarded a degree, diploma, or certificate.

In 13 states, one critical limitation to the definition of a program completer implemented for public institutions is that information is collected only for recipients of associate degrees. As almost all other measures collected are applied only to program completers, students attending a large segment of public postsecondary vocational education are excluded from the information system in these states. No parallel limitations were found among definitions for proprietary institutions.

Somewhat fewer states have standardized definitions for measuring job placement. All states that count placements limit the data collected to program completers. The most common means for determining whether placement is "training related" is for the students themselves to determine whether their employment is related to the training received. Ten states ask the public sector institutions to make this

determination, and 7 states permit proprietary schools to decide which job placements are training related. Only in Arkansas (for voc-tech schools), Florida, Minnesota, and Washington is the determination of "training relatedness" made at the state level.

Computation of Rates

The computation of a completion or placement rate requires at least two elements: 1) a definition of a completer or a job placement, and 2) agreement on the base to which the number of completers or placements is to be compared. Establishing a base number for these rates and obtaining appropriate data appear to be areas where states are experiencing difficulty. Of those states that collect completion data, 75 percent report that they compute a completion rate for public vocational education and 67 percent report that a completion rate is computed for the proprietary component. One area of difficulty is determining which categories of students to consider program enrollees (e.g., full-time, part-time, those completing a minimum portion of total course work).

The computation of placement rates involves greater difficulty, with only about half the states that collect placement data actually computing a placement rate. The primary difficulty is in determining which categories of unemployed persons to exclude from the calculation (e.g., those not seeking employment, or who do not use the school's placement service).

Data Sources

The most frequently used source of information is surveys of former students; the second most popular method is surveys of employers. A few states use third-party data, such as state unemployment insurance wage records. There was reported to be increasing interest in the use of these third-party sources, with the goal of reducing the burden on schools and increasing the reliability of the information obtained. Twenty-one states require public postsecondary vocational schools to conduct graduate surveys and to tabulate and report the results. In Arkansas and Washington, these surveys are conducted directly by the state oversight agency for public vocational programs. Only Indiana currently requires proprietary schools to survey their graduates. Several additional states will soon mandate surveys for graduates of public and proprietary vocational programs.

Data Verification

Few states in which performance data are collected attempt to verify the validity of the data reported by schools. A few states contact a small sample of students or employers directly to validate

claims made by schools. More typically, states simply review information maintained in school files to see whether it matches data reported to the state; the states make no independent effort to determine the validity of this information.

Analyses

Analysis of the data is limited. Most states that require schools to report data do not actually analyze it. The states that do conduct some analysis tend to focus on comparisons of key indicators with established state standards, such as a minimum placement rate, or on the construction of a profile by occupational program. These profiles may then be scrutinized to determine whether any programs are performing unusually well or poorly.

Uses

States that collect and analyze student outcome data use this information in a variety of ways. The most frequent use of the outcome measures collected is to conduct individual program reviews. Another major use is to respond to ad hoc requests from the governor's office, the legislature, or from other government agencies. Fourteen states compile profiles of outcomes for different occupational programs and make this available to public institutions; 8 states do the same for proprietary schools.

Fourteen states report that the information collected from programs in public institutions is made available to consumers. Four of these states also make information from proprietary schools available to assist consumer decision making. Four additional states make proprietary school information available exclusively. Tennessee uses performance-based data to allocate supplemental funds to public postsecondary institutions.

Efforts to make information available about performance to the public range from passive responses to requests to mailings to high schools and public libraries. No states reported publishing results in the newspaper.

Trends

State policies on outcome measurement are changing rapidly. All states that collect some program performance data have altered some aspect of their policies regarding assessment of student outcomes in postsecondary vocational programs during the past 2 years. Overall, 19 states either initiated the collection of outcome information or made major changes to increase the amount of information collected from schools. Four states made changes for both public and proprietary institutions; 11 states addressed only public institutions; and 4

states addressed proprietary schools only. Seven states have passed legislation that has not yet been implemented. Other states have bills pending or pilot projects underway. In 15 states there was no activity identified that would result in a change for public institutions, and in 31 states there was no report of change for private institutions.

This document presents an overview of the findings of this study effort, including synopses of practices and major trends, and a summary and conclusions section. A companion document, Volume II: Appendix: Profiles of State Data Collection Activities, presents more detailed findings on a state-by-state basis of an overview of individual state activities in the measurement of the outcomes of postsecondary education.

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STATE-LEVEL MEASUREMENT OF PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES IN POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Volume I: Executive Summary
An Overview of State Policies

I. INTRODUCTION

In vocational education, as in other areas of education, assessment of performance outcomes is increasingly viewed as a way to measure program quality and to motivate program improvement. This study presents an overview of how states currently assess performance outcomes in postsecondary vocational programs.

Federal education policy is moving rapidly toward an emphasis on measuring performance as an indicator of program accountability. The recently reauthorized Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act requires states to develop performance measures and standards for vocational education at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Current U.S. Department of Education regulations for the Stafford Student Loan Program mandate that institutions offering postsecondary vocational programs provide prospective students with information about the graduation and job placement rates of previous students. This is commonly called "consumer rights information." Performance standards, tied to accreditation or eligibility for student aid, is increasingly viewed as one option to curb program abuse and improve accountability in postsecondary vocational programs.

This study was motivated by the "consumer rights" rules in the Stafford Loan Program, recently supplanted by the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990, which has similar provisions regarding

the collection and disclosure of completion rates of former students. Hence, the focus is on postsecondary education. The study of the governance of individual boards for licensed occupations was beyond the resources available for this study, so little specific information is available here about institutions specializing in such fields as nursing, allied health, cosmetology, or real estate.[1]

The study offers a "snapshot" of what states are currently doing to collect information on program outcomes for students enrolled in postsecondary vocational education. It attempts to answer three main questions:

1. **To what extent do states collect program information on student outcomes and, if so, what types of information?** Do outcome measures include program completion, job placement, training-related job placement, earnings, job competencies, or satisfaction of occupational licensing requirements?

2. **How is information on program outcomes obtained?** What is the source of data? Who collects it? Who interprets the data? What are potential threats to the accuracy, comparability, or consistency of the information obtained?

3. **How is information on program outcomes used?** Are there state standards that must be satisfied? Is the information used to allocate funds for program management, or policy? Is the information made available to consumers?

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[1] Efforts were made during the data collection to include information on the licensed trades, such as cosmetology, real estate, and truck driving. During conversations with the licensing boards of the first states contacted, no board was found that collected any information other than success on the licensing examination. Although some used this information in determining whether to license a school or program for operation, none of the contacted boards reported sharing their information with the public for consumer rights purposes. Because there are so many licensing boards in the typical state, a decision was made that it would require too much of the project resources to contact all licensing boards in every state. Instead, project staff called on two licensing boards in a random sample of states. None revealed practices that differed from the licensing boards in the initial states.

The information for this study was collected during the spring of 1990. A multiple-stage process, beginning with a review of state reports and legislation, was followed by telephone interviews with state officials to fill in missing information. To complete a comprehensive description of the activities in each state, it was necessary to contact state officials responsible for different aspects of postsecondary vocational education in the public and private sectors. The average number of respondents per state was five. Efforts were made to validate respondent information about the nature of state policy by seeking confirmation from more than one source or from written documentation, but either or both of these was not always possible. The practices reported from the states may therefore reflect some degree of overstatement.

Of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, no state[2] was found to have had an outcome measurement policy in place that had not been changed for more than 2 years. The majority of states have either initiated new policies for collecting outcome data, have expanded or improved their collection practices, have passed legislation calling for changes to be implemented in the near future, or have introduced bills in the state legislature seeking authorization for similar changes.

The overview presented in this report reveals that the states vary widely in the outcome measures they have selected to collect, the definitions of those measures, the method of collection, the analysis

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[2] For convenience, throughout this report all of these jurisdictions are referred to as "states."

of these data, and the uses for which they are intended. Although there has been a pace of change and a consistent movement to increase the levels of activity in the collection of outcome measures, there are no identifiable patterns in these changes.

This document presents an overview of the findings of this study effort, including synopses of practices and major trends, and a summary and conclusions section. A companion document, Volume II: Appendix: Profiles of State Data Collection Activities, presents more detailed findings on a state-by-state basis of an overview of individual state activities in the measurement of the outcomes of postsecondary education.

II. COMPARTMENTALIZATION OF THE OVERSIGHT OF POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

One of the most striking features of the measurement of student outcomes in postsecondary vocational education has been the variety of administrative structures used by states and that few states have chosen to centralize the responsibility into a single agency. Table II-1 presents a brief overview of the distribution of agencies at the state level responsible for the oversight of the components of vocational education. Specific agencies for each component are shown in Volume II of this report.

Table II-1. Organization or Agency Responsible for Each Component of Vocational Education

ORGANIZATION RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTRATION	NUMBER (PERCENT) OF STATES ASSIGNING RESPONSIBILITY TO EACH TYPE OF ORGANIZATION		
	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PUBLIC VOCATIONAL/ TECHNICAL SCHOOLS	PROPRIETARY SCHOOLS
Office or Division of Department of Education	12 (23%)	13 (25%)	20 (38%)
Independent Board, Commission, or Council	27 (52%)	19 (37%)	22 (42%)
Higher Education or Community College System	5 (10%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)
Office, Division, or Department of Postsecondary Education	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
Department of Vocational/Technical Education	2 (4%)	5 (10%)	1 (2%)
Licensing Board Only	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (4%)
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (4%)
None	4 (8%)	10 (19%)	4 (8%)

Oversight responsibility for public and proprietary vocational education was found most often to reside in an agency independent of the state department of education, such as a board of regents, commission on postsecondary education, or higher education council. An office, division, or bureau of the state department of education was the second most common location.

Thinking of postsecondary vocational education as having three major components (community colleges, vocational-technical institutes, and proprietary institutions), one would find that only 8 states administer all three components through the same agency. In 18 states, community colleges and vocational-technical schools are administered by the same agency, although the proprietary schools are administered by a third (one of these states has no proprietary schools). Four states assigned oversight responsibility for community colleges and proprietary schools to the same agency, and 3 of these states have no vocational technical schools. Responsibility for both vocational-technical schools and proprietary schools are assigned to the same agency in 2 states. The remaining 20 states have no overlap in the oversight of the components of postsecondary vocational education.

Table II-2 shows the extent of overlap in administrative responsibilities. It demonstrates that about 38 percent of the states administer each component of postsecondary vocational education through a separate agency, and only 15 percent of the states have chosen to have all components administered within the same agency.

Table II-2. Patterns of Governance for Postsecondary Vocational Education

GOVERNANCE PATTERN	NUMBER (PERCENT) OF STATES
All Three Components of Vocational Education Are Administered by the Same Agency	8 (15%)
Community Colleges and Vocational-Technical Schools Are Administered by the Same Agency	18 (35%)
Community Colleges and Proprietary Schools Are Administered by the Same Agency	4 (8%)
Vocational-Technical Schools and Proprietary Schools Are Administered by the Same Agency	2 (4%)
There Is No Overlap in Administration	20 (38%)

Table II-3 shows in more detail the types of state agencies where the overlap in responsibilities is located. The table arrays the types of state agencies by the number of components of vocational education overseen by that agency in each state. The frequencies in the table refer to the number of states fitting that pattern. For example, it is shown in the first column that for 5 states, the state department of education has oversight responsibility for all three components; in 8 states the department has responsibility for two components; in 14 states for one component; and in 25 states the state department of education has no responsibility for assessing the outcomes of postsecondary vocational education programs.

Table II-3. Commonality of Oversight Agency

COMPONENTS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION OVERSEEN	OFFICE/ DIVISION OF DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	INDEPENDENT BOARD, COMMISSION, OR COUNCIL	HIGHER EDUCATION OR COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM	OFFICE/ DIVISION/ DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION	DEPARTMENT OF VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL EDUCATION	LICENSING BOARD ONLY	OTHER	NONE
0	25	20	46	49	47	50	49	37
1	14	6	4	2	3	2	3	12
2	8	16	2	1	1	0	0	3
3	5	10	0	0	1	0	0	0

As of the spring of 1990, no state collected the same information from both public and proprietary schools. Therefore, there is currently no relationship between the number of agencies involved in the oversight of vocational education in a state and the similarity of outcome measure practices for the different components of vocational education. However, personnel in a few states described either previous or potential efforts to implement identical procedures in the two sectors. That these states are among those that administer all components of vocational education by the same agency suggests that the more typical decentralized oversight of governance of public and proprietary organizations impedes the development of comprehensive policies. The broad implementation of a similar uniform approach to the measurement of performance will require special efforts to coordinate across different state agencies and organizations.

III. COLLECTION OF PERFORMANCE DATA

As with the decision about how to administer the assessment of performance outcomes, states were found to differ considerably in their decisions about what to measure and how to conduct the measurements.

When interested parties contemplate the issue of measuring the outcomes of postsecondary vocational education, they must make a series of decisions. Among these are:

- Which outcomes should be measured?
- What operational definition will be used for each measure?
- Will a standardized definition be used across all institutions, or will individual schools be free to construct their own?
- How will the necessary information be collected?
- How will the collected information be used?
- What analyses will be conducted?
- What reports will be generated? And,
- Whether to disseminate the collected information and, if so, how to do so?

In assembling the information for this study, it became clear that states have made different rates of progress through all of these decisions and have made different decisions at each point. A discussion of each of the major measures currently collected by the states illustrates the variation in policy and practice that currently exists among the states. Colorado appears to have developed the most comprehensive set of policies and practices and has eliminated many of the threats to the validity of the data collected that are present in the practices of other states.

Program Completion Counts

The most basic information collected by any state or institution is the number of students completing the postsecondary vocational education program in which they are enrolled. This would seem to be a fundamental measure of program performance. It is also the easiest information to collect as it is usually available from the administrative records of the educational institutions, and usually requires no follow-up information on the students after they leave the program.

However, as shown in Table III-1, the collection of completion data (simply counts of completers and not the computation of a completion rate) at the state level is not universal, especially for proprietary institutions. This is indicative of the status of the collection of outcomes measures by the states.

Table III-1. Institutions Collecting Program Completion Data

NUMBER (PERCENT) OF STATES:	COMMUNITY COLLEGES[3]	PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS
Collecting This Information	46 (88%)	29 (56%)
Not Collecting This Information	6 (12%)	23 (44%)

[3] Vocational-technical institutions are not included in the tables that describe data collection practices. The study typically found that this sector of public postsecondary vocational education either directly modeled the practices for community colleges or participated in state data collection activities for secondary institutions, where requirements to provide placement and job-related information were nonexistent.

Of the states collecting completion data, the majority have developed a standardized definition for classifying former students as completers or noncompleters (Table III-2). Thirty-nine states have developed a standardized definition for public institutions, and 26 states have developed such a definition for proprietary schools. Six states are in the process of developing a definition for the public programs, and 3 states (with almost no overlap) are developing definitions for the proprietary sector.

Table III-2. Status of Development of a Standard Definition for a "Completion"

NUMBER (PERCENT) OF STATES:	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS[4]
Having a Definition in Place	39 (85%)	26 (90%)
Developing a Definition	6 (13%)	3 (10%)
Having No Standard Definition	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Not Collecting Completion Information	6	22

The standard definitions developed by the states differ across states, and some states employ more than one definition. The most common definition of a completer is an individual who satisfactorily completes all program requirements and is awarded a degree, diploma, or certificate. Thirty-eight states have adopted this definition for the public programs, with 16 states having adopted it for the proprietary programs. Another definition in use is the completion of all phases of

[4] One state does not have any proprietary institutions.

a planned course sequence within a defined program without the award of a degree, certificate, or diploma (4 states for public schools, 8 states for proprietary schools). Individual states have developed other definitions, such as the completion of a set proportion of a program followed by employment in a related job. One state is contemplating adopting a definition that involves a survey of the course and program completion intentions of each entering student and then computing the actual percent of the goal completed.

Limitations of Coverage

It should be noted that of the 39 states that have developed a standardized definition of a program completer for students enrolled in public institutions, 13 apply the definition and collect data only for students awarded an associate degree. Nondegree programs are excluded from the data collection efforts of these institutions. No parallel exclusion of students in nondegree programs was found among proprietary schools.

Comparisons across and within states for planning and policy-making purposes are difficult, if not impossible, for the following reasons: (1) many states do not collect data on the number of students completing programs or have no standardized definition of a program completer, (2) the definitions and data collection efforts exclude a large proportion of vocational education students, and (3) the definitions of program completion vary across states.

Notable Practices

In reviewing the practices for collecting completion data reported by the states, it was noted that the activities of several states were distinctive.

One of the issues in defining a "completer" has been whether it is appropriate to assume that an individual who does not complete all of the requirements of a degree, certificate, or other award did not accomplish his or her goals. Illinois reported that they were planning a pilot effort among public school systems that would determine each individual's personal goals, which in turn would be used as the basis to determine whether the individual completed them. Community colleges in Colorado collect information about applicants' educational intentions (according to one of five categories), with these enrollment reasons entered into the state's Student Unit Record Data System.

In Alaska, rather than imposing a definition from the state level, an extensive effort is under way to involve all segments of the vocational education community in the development of definitions that are useful and practical to collect.

Numbers of Students Placed

Another commonly used outcome measure for postsecondary vocational education programs is the number of students employed after they leave the program. Table III-3 shows that the majority of states collect some kind of placement data, although the percentages are smaller than for those collecting completion data.

Table III-3. States Collecting Placement Counts

NUMBER (PERCENT) OF STATES:	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS
Collecting This Information	33 (64%)	21 (40%)
Not Collecting This Information	19 (36%)	31 (60%)

Development of a standardized definition of a placement has not been finished in all states collecting placement counts. Table III-4 indicates that a standard definition has been implemented in 79 percent of the states collecting placement data from public institutions, and in just over half of the states collecting data from proprietary institutions. All of the standardized definitions limit the count of placements to students who are classified as program completers.

Table III-4. States That Have Developed a Standard Definition for a Placement

NUMBER (PERCENT) OF STATES:	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS
Having a Definition in Place	26 (79%)	11 (52%)
Developing a Definition	5 (15%)	4 (19%)
Having No Standard Definition	2 (6%)	6 (29%)
Not Collecting Placement Data	19	31

The standard definition of a placement developed by a majority of states involves an assessment of the relationship of the placement to the training received. Only 2 states collecting data from public

institutions and 3 from the proprietary sector do not impose a condition of "training relatedness" before employment after program completion can be counted as a placement. Some of these states also consider enlisting in the armed services or enrolling in a 4-year institution as a placement (12 states collecting data from public institutions, 4 states collecting from proprietary institutions).

Table III-5 indicates that the states use a variety of means for determining whether a job held by a program completer is related to the training received. The most common measure is to allow the former students to make the determination as part of a response to a survey. Although it is the simplest to implement, this method of determination would seem to offer the least valid and reliable information.

Table III-5. Methods for Determining the "Training Relatedness" of an Occupation

NUMBER (PERCENT) OF STATES WHERE:	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS
Former Students Make the Determination	23 (70%)	10 (47%)
Schools Make the Determination	5 (15%)	6 (29%)
Employers Make the Determination	1 (3%)	2 (10%)
State Agency Makes the Determination	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
A Training Relatedness Determination Is Not Made	2 (6%)	3 (14%)
Placement Information Is Not Collected	19	31

Notable Practices

Florida makes extensive use of the Unemployment Insurance Employer Wage and Tax Report collected by the state department of employment security. By matching the social security numbers of postsecondary vocational program participants against wage data records and other automated sources, it is possible to obtain accurate counts of the numbers of former program participants employed, and to obtain some estimate of their earnings.

Washington has developed a procedure for assessing whether the job a former student holds is related to the training received. They have created a matching matrix that compares the courses completed by each individual using the Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) codes with the requirements for each occupation, represented by the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes.

Other Performance Measures

A small number of states collected several outcome measures from postsecondary vocational education institutions in addition to completion and placement data. Among these additional outcome measures are earnings, gains in basic or job-related skills, and success of program graduates in passing licensure examinations. Table III-6 shows the relative frequency of the collection of each measure.

The collection of information on earnings from public institutions was reported in 21 states. Seventeen of the states used student surveys to obtain this information; 4 states (Florida, Illinois, Washington, and Utah, with the latter in a pilot test mode) used unemployment insurance wage records data. No states reported the

routine, comprehensive collection of earnings data for former proprietary schools students; California, New Jersey, and Tennessee require schools to provide validating information when claims about earnings are used in advertising.

Table III-6. Number of States Collecting Other Outcomes Measures

OUTCOME MEASURE	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS
Earnings	21	3 (When used in advertising)
Gains in Basic Skills	13	0
Licensure	12	2

A small group of states have elected to include gains in basic skills or in the skills specific to an occupation as measures of performance for their public vocational institutions. Twelve states gather information on gains in basic skills using standardized tests administered prior to enrollment and prior to completion. Six of these states also collect information on gains in job skills. One state collects only information about gains in job skills. No states reported collecting such measures for students attending proprietary schools in programs for occupations other than the licensed trades.

A training program completer's score on the examination for a license trade is generally used only as a measure of performance for the individual. Only a few states have aggregated the data on the

success rates of former students by program or by school to serve as a measure of the performance of the education offered.

Notable Practices

Colorado, Connecticut, and New Jersey make systematic efforts to assess changes in basic skills. A standardized test is administered soon after enrollment and again at the end of the program for students in public institutions. Connecticut uses the New Jersey Test of Basic Skills. Colorado uses the American College Testing (ACT) Program's ACT plus program-specific exams. New Jersey administers the New Jersey College Basic Skills Placement Tests.

Computation of Rates

The performance measures discussed thus far have all consisted of counts of the numbers of students in each category. The computation of ratios or rates for these measures would greatly enhance the usefulness of these measures for comparisons across institutions, for a review of a single institution over time, or for the attainment of some established standard. However, the use of the outcome measures collected to develop rates was not universally observed. Of those states that collect completion counts, for example, only 75 percent compute a completion rate for the public component's postsecondary vocational education and 67 percent for the proprietary component. Table III-7 shows that placement rates are computed by an even smaller proportion of the states: 55 percent for public institutions and 62 percent for proprietary institutions.

Table III-7. States Computing Completion and Placement Rates

NUMBER (PERCENT) OF STATES:	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS
Computing Completion Rate	34 (74% of the states collecting completion data)	19 (66% of the states collecting completion data)
Computing Placement Rate	18 (54% of the states collecting placement data)	13 (62 % of the states collecting placement data)

The computation of a completion or placement rate requires at least two elements: a definition of a completion or a placement, and agreement on the base to which the number of completers or placements is to be compared. Establishing a consensus for a definition of the base number for these rates and obtaining the appropriate data appear to be areas in which states that are seeking to measure program outcomes are experiencing difficulty.

For completion rates, most states use the number of students entering a program at a given time (e.g., 2 years earlier for a program that typically takes 2 years to complete). Among the variations used to construct the base are to exclude those still in school, to exclude an estimated proportion of entering students who will leave the program and later return to finish it, or to use only the number of students completing a predetermined number of courses as the threshold for inclusion in the computation. One state, for example, only includes students who have completed 10 vocational credits in any measures of completion or placement for its public institutions.

The primary difficulty in developing a formula for computing a placement rate was establishing a consensus on which categories of unemployed program completers to exclude. The schools argue that it is appropriate to exclude from the calculations students who have become ill, are pregnant, or are single parents of young children. The schools also indicate that students who have decided not to seek employment should not be included, and that students who do not use the school's placement service--which is argued to be an integral part of the career preparation component of their programs--should not be counted in measures of the performance of these programs.

IV. DATA COLLECTION AND VERIFICATION

Outcome measures, almost by definition, focus on events in the careers of program completers after they leave the school. With the exception of program completion counts and rates, the data on program outcomes must be obtained from sources beyond the records schools maintain for their own administration. The most frequently used source is surveys of former students, followed by surveys of employers. The efforts to collect information through these sources raise serious questions about the survey design, representativeness of the former students who respond, the validity and reliability of the information collected, and the burden this effort places on the respondents and the schools. Some states use third-party data, such as state Unemployment Insurance Wage Records data, as a way to obtain reliable information at a low level of effort, and a significant number of other states reported an interest in using such sources.

Data Collection

Surveys

Table IV-1 shows that 21 states require public postsecondary vocational schools to conduct graduate surveys to collect a variety of information. In Maryland and Washington, the state oversight agency surveys graduates of these schools directly. Florida currently requires proprietary schools to conduct a survey of students. Five additional states soon will implement surveys of graduates for public schools, and 3 plan to implement surveys of proprietary schools.

Table IV-1. Data Sources for Information Other Than Completion Data

DATA SOURCE (Some States Use Multiple Sources)	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS
Schools Required to Survey Completers	21 (64% of states collecting information beyond completion)	1 (5% of states collecting information beyond completion)
State Agency Surveys Completers	2 (6%)	0
Schools Required to Survey Employers	11 (33%)	2 (10%)
State Wage-Data or IRS Data (Excludes Pilot Studies or Demonstration Programs)	5 (15%)	0

A major component of the surveys is the current employment status of the respondent. Former students who are not employed are asked questions to determine whether they are pursuing employment. Those who are employed are asked to complete questions on the relationship of the current job to the training received. In 17 states, the employed graduates are asked for current or initial wage information. Other questions frequently included are measures of job satisfaction and ratings of the quality of the training program.

Eleven states require public institutions to conduct surveys of the employers of their graduates. However, only Florida and Oregon require proprietary institutions to conduct employer surveys. In nearly all of these states, the employers are asked to rate whether the training received by the graduates is related to the current job. The

employers also frequently are asked to rate the job performance of the graduate and to rate the quality of the training program.

State Wage and IRS Data

During the assembly of information for this study, interest was expressed in the use of third-party data for some or all performance measures. The most frequently mentioned sources were the state Unemployment Insurance Wage Records and insurance files. Currently, 5 states (Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, and Washington) use these data on a regular basis as a source of performance measures for public institutions. Four additional states are said to be near implementation of the regular use of these data for performance measures. Four states are using either state wage data, IRS data, or both in pilot studies of the development of performance measures or the establishment of student data. Outcome measures that can be gathered for individual graduates of training programs from these data are information on placement status and some information on earnings.

The states make other uses of these data sources that are not related to performance measures. At least one state uses the combined wage and unemployment data to develop labor force projections. A number of states use the information as part of loan default management programs to track graduates.

Data Verification

The majority of the states that collect performance data report little activity to verify the validity of the data collected. A summary of the reports of verification efforts is presented in

Table IV-2. The verification activity most often described was the review of records during periodic on-site reviews of program operations and records. Most of these reviews are annual, but in some cases as many as 8 years pass between reviews. These reviews are conducted for public institutions in 17 states, and for proprietary institutions in 11 states.

Table IV-2. Data Verification Methods

VERIFICATION METHOD	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS
Review of School Records	17 (37% of states collecting any outcome information)	11 (38% of states collecting any outcome information)
Direct State Contact with a Sample of School Survey Respondents	0	4 (14% of states collecting any outcome information)
Verification of Advertising Claims	0	11 (38% of states collecting any outcome information)

The purpose of the verification effort during the on-site reviews is to certify that the data submitted to the state matches the data contained in the school's files. With the exception of data on program completion, this type of review cannot be said to establish the validity of that information. It would not reveal whether biases were introduced through the manner in which the survey was conducted, the

manner in which responses were handled or edited, or a variety of other sources.

Several efforts go beyond this type of review to evaluate the validity of the performance data:

- Four states (Florida, Minnesota, Oregon, and Rhode Island) seek to assess the validity of the data reported by proprietary schools by making direct contact with a sample of the graduate or employer respondents to the surveys conducted by the proprietary schools. Only South Carolina assesses this validity for public schools.
- Eight states, two of which are in the pilot test phase, reduce the likelihood that the data are biased by the actions of the institutions by conducting surveys of graduates or employers directly, or by using data from independent third parties.
- Eleven states conduct efforts to verify data from the proprietary schools when those schools make claims about performance measures in their advertising.

Analyses

The analyses conducted by the states with the information collected vary in complexity. Table IV-3 shows the relative frequency with which different kinds of analyses are conducted. Overall, the majority of the states do not conduct analyses that enhance the ability of the policymaker or consumer to differentiate between the outcomes of alternative programs or institutions. In most instances, the analyses that were reported focus on placement rates. The primary analysis of completion rates that was reported was a quick examination to see that there was no significant decrease from prior years.

Table IV-3. Analyses of the Data Collected (Multiple Responses Counted)

NUMBER (PERCENT) OF STATES CONDUCTING EACH TYPE OF ANALYSIS	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS
Comparison with an Established State Standard	17 (37%)	8 (28%)
Comparison of Placement Data with State Employment Trends	5 (11%)	3 (10%)
Ranking of Schools on Key Indicators	3 (7%)	0 (0%)
Review of Each Program	10 (22%)	0 (0%)
Evaluative Narrative	5 (11%)	0 (0%)
Employment Profile by Geographic Region	6 (13%)	0 (0%)
Listing of Data Reported by Schools	8 (17%)	4 (14%)
States Collecting Any Outcome Data	46	29

The analysis that was reported most often to have been conducted using the data collected is a comparison of a critical outcome indicator to a standard. A critical outcome indicator analysis is done for public institutions in 17 states and for proprietary schools in 8 states. Several examples are provided below:

- California: At least a 60 percent completion rate and at least a 70 percent placement rate 6 months after completion must be maintained for each proprietary school program, or the program will be discontinued (planned for 1991).
- Florida: An improvement of 20 percent each year is required in the number of students completing each public school program. Also, if the placement rate for a program in a public institution falls below 70 percent for 3 consecutive years, the program loses state funding.

- Illinois: If the completion rate for a proprietary school falls below 50 percent of the industry average in the state, the institution is placed on probation for 1 year. If the rate is not above this average the following year, the school's license can be revoked.

- Kansas: Public schools are required to have a 70 percent placement rate for students within 2 years after graduating. This review leads to an agreement on program improvements and assistance from the state. Repeated failure to meet the critical standard could lead to discontinuation of a program.

- Oregon: If a proprietary school fails to maintain completion and placement rates of at least 75 percent of the state average, it will be put on probation for up to 1 year. If unable to maintain at least this 75 percent of state average for 2 consecutive years, the state may revoke the school's license.

The second most common analysis done is simply to format the data as it is reported without comparison to a critical indicator, comparison to employment trends, or even comparison to data submitted by the school in previous years. This approach is taken in 8 states for the data submitted by public schools and 4 states for proprietary schools.

Five states compare placement data submitted by public schools to statewide employment trends in each occupation. Three states perform the same analysis for proprietary schools.

Three states produce rankings of all of the programs in public schools by key indicators.

Ten states conduct a review for each program offered by each public postsecondary vocational school, attempting to identify strengths and weaknesses. Five states prepare evaluative narratives for each school. These reviews are conducted in an advisory capacity, with the state agency and the institutions in a partnership to maximize the quality of the education offered.

Six states aggregate the data submitted by individual schools to develop profiles either by geographic region within the state or by trade. The analyses seek to identify areas or trades that present employment opportunities and those in which employment is problematic.

V. USES OF THE OUTCOME DATA

Obtaining clear, exhaustive information on the uses made of the performance data collected was one of the hardest elements to gather for the overview of state activities. It appears that those within the oversight agencies who are involved in the collection of the data do not have full knowledge of how the information is used, particularly when it is forwarded to other agencies.[5] In these situations, the staff responsible for the data collection were often unsure of the uses of these data by the other agencies. In general, the uses of the data reported fell into three categories: consumer rights, licensure, and a variety of activities that are loosely termed as management. The relative frequency of each use is shown in Table V-1.

For this overview, a state was said to use the data for consumer rights when the data were made available to the general public, either through direct mailings or when available statewide in public libraries, and when the information available contained some evaluative information. The evaluative information could be explicitly provided by the oversight agency, or they could provide the background information necessary for such a judgment--such as a statewide average or the statement of performance standards. Some of the sources contacted considered consumer rights uses to include the use of data by the oversight agency to close down poor performing programs, to establish new programs in growing occupations, or to improve the

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[5] For example, the staff member of a postsecondary education commission who assemble data from vocational schools might deliver his or her findings to the state education department and to the state department of labor.

performance of programs to benefit consumers. This classification was not adopted for this report because the consumer was not directly involved in the decision on what action to take.

Table V-1. Number (Percent) of States Reporting Various Uses of the Performance Measures Collected

USES OF PERFORMANCE MEASURES	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS
Consumer Rights	14 (30%)	8 (28%)
Licensure	0 (0%)	17 (59%)
State Funding Decisions	22 (48%)	0 (0%)
Expansion/Contraction of Programs by Occupation	21 (46%)	0 (0%)
Program Review to Improve Operations	13 (28%)	8 (28%)
Determination of Need for Corrective Actions	18 (39%)	9 (31%)
Performance-Based Allocation of Supplemental Funds	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Number of States Collecting Any Outcome Information	46	29

Fourteen states make the information collected from programs in public institutions available for consumer rights uses. Four of these states also make the information from proprietary schools available for consumer rights issues. Four additional states make only the proprietary school information available to consumers.

One of the responsibilities of the state agency assigned oversight responsibility for proprietary schools is the periodic consideration of whether to grant each school a license to continue to

operate in the state. Seventeen states reported that outcome measurement data were part of the materials examined when reviewing applications for license renewals. Schools falling below established standards were subject to more intensive reviews, being placed on probation, or being denied a license.

Management uses involve a number of dimensions. One use is decisions made by the governor and state legislature of funding levels for public institutions, including the decision to "defund" an institution or an occupational program. This was reported to be a major use in 22 states. Another dimension is the decision about whether to expand or contract opportunities to enroll in a training program in a particular occupational area. This could be done by changing the size of existing institutions, or by creating new institutions or closing existing ones. This is a use of the data from public institutions in 21 states.

Program review is another dimension of management uses of the data. Two basic kinds of program review are conducted. One is to aid institutions in making sound management decisions about program offerings, enrollment size, and the quality of training presented. These are generally conducted by the oversight agency as an aid to and in partnership with the institutions. This was a focus in 13 states for public institutions and in 8 states for proprietary schools. Another category of program review is to assess the quality of the school with the aim of imposing corrective actions to improve program offerings, or to identify schools experiencing problems that call for more intensive contact and review by the state agency. This was a

focus in 18 states for public schools and in 9 states for proprietary schools.

Notable Practices

Tennessee makes use of the outcome measures it collects to make performance-based funding decisions when distributing supplemental funds to public institutions over and above their base allotments.

Reports Produced

The most common reporting format listed by the states is to prepare a descriptive institutional profile that contains the outcome measures for each program within each school but that does not contain evaluative comments, ranking, or comparison to a standard. This is at least one of the reports generated for public institutions in 30 states and for proprietary institutions in 12 states.

Another reporting format is to present information by program and school but which includes some evaluative measure of performance, whether it is a summary of problems encountered, comparisons to the state average for this type of training program, a ranking, comparison to a previous year's data, or comparison to a standard. This type of report is prepared for public institutions in 20 states and for proprietary institutions in 7 states.

Other kinds of reports include those that provide directories of schools, give the programs offered, and indicate licensing status (often excluding proprietary schools that are not licensed). These are prepared for public schools in 3 states and for proprietary schools in 8 states.

In 5 states, data from the public schools are used to prepare profiles by trade or geographic area, giving indications of where employment opportunities are to be found. Data from proprietary schools are included in these reports in 3 of these states.

Another major category of reports is responding to ad hoc requests from the governors, legislatures, or other government agencies. This is the major reporting activity for data from public institutions in 7 states. In addition, 6 states report that the data are placed on-line for inquiries about individual schools or for aggregate analyses.

Nine states indicate that although they collect performance data from the public institutions, no formal reports are produced from the data. Ten states do not prepare a report from data collected from proprietary schools.

Report Recipients

Table V-2 presents a tally of the recipients of reports generated by the oversight agencies. It should be kept in mind that most of the agencies prepare more than one kind of report, and the reports do not have the same pattern of dissemination. Overall, the relative frequency of report recipients were the same for both the data collected from community colleges and from proprietary schools.

Table V-2. Recipients of Reports Based Upon Performance Data

REPORT RECIPIENT	NUMBER (PERCENT) OF STATES SENDING REPORTS BASED UPON DATA FROM:	
	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS
Oversight Agency for Internal Use Only	7 (15%)	4 (14%)
Schools Submitting Data	28 (61%)	11 (38%)
Other State Agencies, Boards, Commissions, Etc.	17 (37%)	3 (10%)
Governor and State Legislature	27 (59%)	9 (31%)
Secondary Schools	9 (20%)	2 (7%)
General Public or Public Libraries	16 (35%)	8 (28%)
Number of States Collecting Any Outcome Data	46	29

All of the agencies that collect outcome information use those data internally. The most frequently reported external recipients of the data were the schools that had submitted the information, the governors and state legislature, and other agencies of the state government. Approximately 15 percent of the states reported that the data collected were used only by the collecting agency.

VI. TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF STATE POLICY

Two of the striking features of the information gathered for the overview were how recently changes had been enacted in many states and how frequently descriptions of new procedures (that had been enacted but were to be implemented at a later date) were encountered. In fact, some of the difficulties frequently encountered in assembling the state overview were that many of the information sources were focused on descriptions of changes not yet implemented, or proposed changes not yet approved, and were reluctant to provide materials or answer questions about present practices. An information source in one state called back three times in 2 months to report the passage of new legislation related to outcome measurement.

Table VI-1 summarizes the pace of change reported during the assembly of the overviews. Few states were found to have initiated policies or made major changes to existing policies for the collection of performance data more than 2 years previously. (Several mentioned the termination of the Vocational Education Data System [VEDS] in the mid-eighties.) Overall, 19 states either initiated the collection of outcome measures from postsecondary vocational institutions or made major changes to increase the amount of information collected from these schools within the last 2 years. Four of those states initiated policies or made changes in the collection of outcome measures from both public and proprietary institutions. Eleven states addressed only public institutions, and an additional 4 states addressed the proprietary schools only.

Table VI-1. The Pace of Change in State Policies

TIME PERIOD OF CHANGE	NUMBER (PERCENT) OF STATES MAKING CHANGES	
	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS
Change Implemented Within the Last 2 Years	15 (29%)	7 (13%)
Legislation for Change Passed, but Implementation to Occur Later than Spring 1990	7 (13%)	2 (4%)
Change Under Serious Consideration (Bills Introduced, Regulations Drafted)	8 (15%)	6 (12%)
Discussions of Changes Under Way	6 (12%)	6 (12%)
No Apparent Activity	16 (31%)	31 (60%)

Legislation has been passed or regulations have been approved that call for changes to be implemented for public institutions in 7 states and for proprietary institutions in 2 states, all at some date later than spring of 1990. Activities that are being carried out during the waiting period include developing definitions of performance indicators, determining the format for data collection, determining what analyses and reports will be produced, and making arrangements for access to third-party data, such as state Unemployment Insurance Wage Records data.

In another group of states, bills have been introduced in the legislature or regulations drafted that are reported to have good chances of passage and implementation. Public institutions are the focus of these efforts in 8 states, and proprietary institutions are the focus in 6 states. In a final group of states, serious consideration and discussion of the implementation of efforts to collect outcome measures were reported to be under way. Six states are discussing such measures for public institutions, and 6 states are considering them for proprietary schools.

In 15 states, there was no apparent activity that would result in a change in the collection of performance measures for public postsecondary vocational schools, and in 31 states there were no reports of changes for proprietary schools.

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This report has presented an overview of the activities conducted by the states to collect and analyze outcome performance data from postsecondary vocational education institutions nationwide. It was found that most states have undertaken limited activities to assess performance outcomes, but few states have employed multiple measures of performance, and most have had difficulty analyzing the data that they collect or in using it for program improvement or policy. It also was found that many states are making efforts to increase the quality and comprehensiveness of the information collected and to make greater use of the information collected.

The overview also shows that there is wide variation in the level of effort individual states are making to assess program outcomes and in the sophistication of the approach that has been implemented. There is wide variation among the states in every aspect of the outcome measurement process, including the decision on what to measure, how to collect the necessary information, how to analyze it, what use to make of the data, and with whom to share the results.

The practices of the states are changing rapidly. Few of the states that collect outcome measures were found to have had an outcome measurement policy in place that was unchanged for more than 2 years. With regard to public postsecondary vocational institutions, 15 states either had implemented new policies for collecting outcome data or had made changes in their policies to either expand the kinds of information collected or improve the methods of collection. Seven states have passed legislation calling for similar changes, but they

will be implemented at some point after the spring of 1990, the time the information for this overview was collected. In other states, bills have been introduced or serious consideration is being given to the adoption of such changes. In only 16 states was no apparent activity found in this area.

Fewer efforts to collect outcome measures are under way for proprietary schools. No efforts to implement or improve the collection of outcome measures were found in 31 states. Seven states have implemented policies or made changes to improve the collection of outcome measures during the last 2 years, and two additional states have passed legislation that will be implemented after the spring of 1990.

The most frequently collected outcome measure was the number of students who completed a training program (46 states for public postsecondary schools, 29 for proprietary schools). The next most frequently completed measure collected at the state level was whether program completers were placed in jobs (33 states for public schools, 21 for proprietary schools). In nearly every instance, efforts were made to determine whether the placement was related to the training received, usually by asking the program completer to make that judgment. Such outcome measures as earnings and gains in basic skills or job knowledge were collected in smaller numbers of states. For each outcome measure, policies were significantly more likely to be in place to collect these data for public schools than for proprietary schools.

Efforts to establish the validity of the data collected were found in few states. Analyses of the data tended to focus on

comparisons of key indicators with established standards, such as a minimum percentage of completers to be placed, or on the construction of a profile by occupational program with determinations of performance that was unusually high or poor.

The uses for which the outcome measures were collected also varied widely across states. The most frequent use was to conduct a program review to either provide the institution with the information necessary to decide on programs to offer and means to improve quality, or to provide the oversight agency with an indicator that a school was performing poorly. A number of states also made the information available to the public with an explicit goal of providing information necessary for informed consumer decisions. Fourteen states made outcome measures for public schools available for use by consumers, and 8 states made measures available from proprietary schools.

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